

# BREAKING GROUND

## MEET *the* 2008 YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM STUDENT DELEGATES



**KELLY WELLS, KNOXVILLE**

"When I was in elementary school, I had a teacher who embarrassed me in front of the whole class...Because of my ADD, it was hard for me to finish my work at the same time as all the other students. I was always interrupted by people walking in the hallway, other students talking, sharpening pencils and all other noises. One day the teacher told me that none of the class would go to recess until I finished my work. All the kids started yelling at me to hurry... That made it so much harder to finish and I think we all had to stay in that day. Kids were really, really angry at me, and some were never friendly again. I cried a lot that week. My teacher could have handled that a different way. I will if I become a teacher."



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**T E N N E S S E E  
C O U N C I L**



**DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES**

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## CONTACT INFORMATION



This free publication is produced six times a year by the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development and Kent Communications Group. Subscription requests, change of address, and submissions for possible publication should be directed to: Breaking Ground, Council on Developmental Disabilities, 404 James Robertson Parkway, Suite 130, Nashville, TN 37243. phone: 615-532-6615.

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Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities Grant Number 1-03999-1-0. Authorization Number 339371, July 2001. 5,600 copies. This public document was promulgated at a cost of \$.46 per copy.

## MEET *the* 2008 YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM STUDENT DELEGATES

BY NED ANDREW SOLOMON

The Council is looking forward to our 8th annual Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), July 7-10 on the Vanderbilt University campus. YLF is an opportunity for students with disabilities from across Tennessee to gather and discuss their lives, their successes and challenges and their plans for life after high school. In a setting that promotes independence and

values high expectations, students will learn and gain experience from each other, counselors and program assistants – several of whom are returning YLF grads – and local and national speakers.

As is our *Breaking Ground* tradition, please help us welcome this year's class by reading excerpts from their application essays.



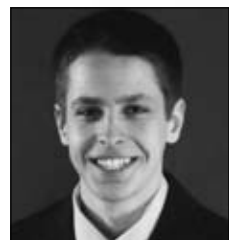
"My two positive influences in my life would be my mother and my godmother...My mother has always pushed me to achieve my goals...My godmother has always told me to believe in myself, no matter what...They have taught me courage, responsibility and organizational skills."

**Michelle Adams, Spring Hill**



"I want to go to this Youth Leadership Forum because I have a high frequency hearing loss, and expectations to not let it affect my life...I want to learn how to succeed in school, and learn from people and their experiences...My friends are positive influences...I'm treated like 'one of the guys', and they encourage me to be part of the crowd."

**Jacob Arnseth, Knoxville**



"I feel I'm qualified to go to YLF because I'm a high-schooler with Asperger's Syndrome. Someday I want to live on my own, and I want to learn more about independent living with a disability. I also want to be able to find the right job. Some things that sound cool to me are staying on campus and getting to know other people like me."

**Ross Conrad, Tullahoma**



"My future plans following my high school graduation are to go to the University of Tennessee, go to a good law school, and become a lawyer...My current special education teacher, Vicki Lintz is a positive influence...She has helped me through school and life. She helped me realize the need to be successful now, to be successful later. Also, her constantly positive and cheery mood has helped me to be more positive when looking at things."

**Garrett Baker, Knoxville**



"I feel that I am qualified for this Forum because I am a hard-working 10th grader in high school who just happens to have a disability. I love doing things

**Carrie Dean, Paris**

to help my community...My passion is helping people and I would do anything for others, disability or no disability...When I graduate from high school, I'm planning to attend a 4-year college, majoring in pre-dentistry. After that I want to go to dentistry school. More than likely I'll move to a large city. I just feel as though I need to leave the small town of Paris, Tennessee, to become as successful as I aspire to be."



**Allyson Edde,  
Nolensville**

"As I got older, not only did my disability make things harder academically, but socially. When reaching middle school, kids notice when you are in the 'Resource'

class. This label made me very self conscious, and I would avoid reading aloud in class at all costs. Eventually I learned that others will not understand if I do not explain. Now I hold my head up high and read when asked. It still is not easy, but I can get through it."

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**James "Zac" Estep,  
Elizabethton**

"Dad has a shopping center in the Boones Creek area of Gray, Tennessee. To help him build it I got tools, sowed the grass, mowed the grass, cleaned the parking lot, planted flowers and pulled weeds. We worked as a team. He helps me with my homework and helped me study for my Algebra gateway, which I passed...I want to be able to talk better. If someone doesn't understand my speech, I use sign language, speak slower, use my fingers to show numbers, write my messages on paper or show them what I'm talking about."



**TeResa Henderson,  
Memphis**

"If afforded the opportunity to attend the Youth Leadership Forum, I strongly believe this will allow me to not only make a difference in my life, but also the lives of those around me. It was once stated to me that everyone you meet can in some way or another have an impact on your life...Possessing effective leadership skills can allow you to achieve things never thought possible just by being one to step up and have a take charge attitude, yet still being open and willing to include the input and insight of other members involved."



**Nick Loftis, Monroe**

"The experiences of having to deal with a learning disability have been hard to deal with, but as you go through life you can learn to deal with [it] and move on, because you have no control over having any kind of a disability. You cannot let it control your life...My future plans are to go to trade school and get my electrician's license, so that I can help my dad when he is doing stuff like remodeling houses, outdoor stuff or helping other people."



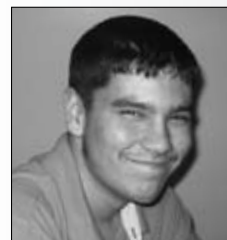
**Carol Mackinnon,  
Gatlinburg**

"There have been two people that have made major influences on my leadership skills. My high school band director, Mr. Ron Hicks, has helped me develop perseverance and diligence through teaching me to play the flute. My junior year, I was awarded the position of Junior Band Lieutenant...Outside of school, Ms. Kelly Merriman has taught me to further my leadership potential. As my supervisor, Ms. Merriman has helped me better my communication skills, improve my work ethic, and gain the ability to balance a hectic schedule."



**Carolyn Meyer, Brentwood**

"I would enjoy being a delegate to this Forum because I am interested in learning more about government and choices that are out there for me. I love people, and have a positive outlook on life. I feel that I could contribute to the discussions and bring insight to the issues...I look forward to living an independent life. I plan on having a full-time job and career and contributing to the community."



**Xavier Ortiz, Cunningham**

"I believe I am qualified to attend this Forum because I have participated in many community activities and helped many charities with fundraisers...I also participated in the Student Government Association of our school, where I served for two years in a row...After I graduate from high school I plan on attending Austin Peay State University to major in mathematics, and get a minor in education so that I can become a high school math teacher."



**Brian Penny, Sale Creek**

"I have always enjoyed history and government studies and ideas. I am willing and eager to gain more knowledge of how the government applies to me as an individual with a physical disability. My mother has always encouraged me to learn more about my rights and status in society... My experiences as a martial artist and cyclist as well as those as a basketball and tennis player have opened many opportunities for me to influence peoples' attitudes toward individuals with disabilities."



**Heather Rasmussen, Watertown**

"I would like to attend this Forum, because I think it would give me much needed advice and experience, which could be beneficial to my career later in life. Many of the activities planned sound interesting and perhaps a bit challenging, which also piques my interest... One of my role models is Jane Goodall... The fact that she accomplished so much in the face of many people telling her she couldn't, or shouldn't try in some cases, is very encouraging to me."

"I have hearing loss, low vision and learning disabilities. I want a chance to learn some work skills... Ken Bowman is my youth minister. He helps me by letting me participate in trips with the youth, and teaches me about God and how to treat others... I would like to get training in auto mechanics and get a job working on cars."



**David Trimmer, Humboldt**

"I would love to attend a science class called Forensics that deals with how to investigate crime scenes... I would like to play football at my school, but I can't because I am blind in one eye, and I have a VP [ventriculoperitoneal] Shunt. I do not want to take a chance of losing all my vision, or of damaging my brain. When I was in Junior High School, I was a manager for the team."



**Dustin Trimmer, Humboldt**

"When I was in elementary school, I had a teacher who embarrassed me in front of the whole class... Because of my ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder], it was hard for me to finish my work at the same time as all the other students. I was always interrupted by people walking in the hallway, other students talking, sharpening pencils and all other noises. One day the teacher told me that none of the class would go to recess until I finished my work. All the kids started yelling at me to hurry... That made it so much harder to finish and I think we all had to stay in that day. Kids were really, really angry at me, and some were never friendly again. I cried a lot that week. My teacher could have handled that a different way. I will if I become a teacher."



**Kelly Wells, Knoxville**

"I have had both positive and negative experiences of having autism. On the bright side of my disability, discrimination does not hurt my feelings because I am blind to it... But that is also a potential problem, because it blocks me from some opportunities to improve the world's understanding of people with differences. Another aspect of having a cognitive disability is that I am less mature than my neurotypical peers, and becoming independent more slowly. But I am independent enough to start my future plans."



**Eleanor Wolfe, Knoxville**

To find out more about YLF, or to get an application for the 2009 Forum, please contact Ned Andrew Solomon, program director, at 615-532-6556, or by e-mail at [ned.solomon@state.tn.us](mailto:ned.solomon@state.tn.us).



# MOVING *from* NEED *to* VALUE

## *Timothy Shriver Speaks to Our Communities*

BY JAN ROSEMERGY

"I want to challenge us to think differently about where the field of disability is going," Timothy Shriver said to a rapt audience at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Celebration of Community Partners on April 1, 2008, as he shared his life's work and passion.

Mr. Shriver leads the worldwide Special Olympics movement, which has three million athletes and 1.3 million coaches and volunteers taking part in 182 countries. Moreover, Special Olympics is undergoing transformation through novel programs to promote positive attitudes toward people with disabilities, to train athlete leaders, to build inclusive international disability public policies, to foster family support networks and to promote athlete health and wellness through large-scale health screenings.

Mr. Shriver makes his points by telling stories of change. The Opening Ceremony of the 1995 World Special Olympics was the first ever

attended by a U.S. President. A professional photographer taking photos of President Clinton in the distance saw a group of Special Olympians holding up their disposable cameras—but with the lenses toward their own faces. Concerned that they did not know how to take photos, he explained the need to turn the camera, lens outward. They thanked him—and then explained that the lens functions like magnifying binoculars when one looks through it.

"I like that story," Mr. Shriver said, "because it frames expectations and changes in expectations. The photographer's assumption was about incompetence. Who was the most changed person on the field that day? That photographer changed just as much as the athletes. It's that kind of change we need to think about as community partners and as scholars."

Mr. Shriver readily acknowledged the substantial progress of the last several decades focused on inclusion, social justice, services



Timothy Shriver and Matthew Drumright, whose photo of a sunflower was the visual theme for "Growing Together", a celebration of Community Partners. Mr. Drumright's framed photo with plaque was presented to Mr. Shriver as a gift. Mr. Shriver praised his photos of Special Olympics athletes.

and supports, education and IDEA, ADA, housing, employment, and more. "But this is about social justice and need," Mr. Shriver pointed out. "It's not so much about the value of individuals with intellectual or other disabilities."

Mr. Shriver cited a recent study indicating that over 60% of Americans surveyed think that a child with a disability should not be in their child's school. He emphasized that this is not an attitude prior to decades of disability rights work, but is now, today. "The majority of Americans see a child with special needs as a risk to their child, not as an asset," Mr. Shriver said.

Equally passionate about the conditions of individuals with intellectual disabilities worldwide, Mr. Shriver characterized the care of this population in many places around the world as "simply criminal," and indicated that national and international agencies are not addressing this situation. He showed findings of a review of national data systems in 12 countries worldwide to illustrate the disparity between the large number of systems tracking indicators of well-being for the typical population, and the far smaller number tracking indicators for persons with disabilities — fewer yet for those with intellectual disabilities. "If you have no problem identified, you have no solution identified," Mr. Shriver said. "You have no gap between what's ideal and what's real. And so you do nothing."

Mr. Shriver told the story of Misty, a young woman with an intellectual disability in Oklahoma who was denied an organ transplant, excluded because she was classified as lacking mental competence. She worked fulltime, lived independently and was competitive in Special Olympics. "She follows the rules better than most people, and would be a fantastic patient because of rigorously adhering to what was proscribed for her," explained Mr. Shriver. "Our movement is about making the statement that all of you make everyday in your lives: This person is not a liability. This person is not a problem. This person may have special challenges. How many people don't?"

Every individual has weaknesses, and every individual has strengths, Mr. Shriver stressed. "But we don't talk about strengths in this field as much as we ought to. We don't talk about the absolute benefit of being a colleague, a friend, a brother, a sister, a father, a mother, a team mate of a person with a disability. We talk about adapting to them instead of talking about making a world where their gifts are celebrated."

"Our movement is not about *'them'*," he continued. "There is no them. It's about all of *us*. Everybody has a gift. Everybody has a need. We come together to celebrate both."

Making comparisons to the Women's Movement and the Civil Rights Movement, Mr. Shriver argued that these movements did not just change the world for women or for people of color but changed the world for everybody. "A movement is a way of thinking. It's a way you believe," Mr. Shriver said.



Photos by Tommy Lawson

Pam Inman, Nashville Special Olympian, with Timothy Shriver, who indicated that Pam was one of the first to become an email buddy and that she regularly keeps him informed about all Vanderbilt athletics. Although they have exchanged emails for several years, they met for the first time at the April 1<sup>st</sup> Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Community Partners Luncheon.

A story of a Unified Team in Slovakia illustrated such a change in thinking. The school for typically developing students was in the town, while the special education school was outside the town. Each day the students attending the special education school had to walk down the street where they were jeered and mocked by students attending the "regular" school. A Unified Team was formed, and for the first time students from the "regular" school went to the "special" school and competed together. The name calling stopped.

"Imagine being the mother of a student with special needs, how grateful you would feel that this ridiculing of your child had finally ended," said Mr. Shriver. "Imagine being the mother of the child who had done the jeering—what a gift it is that your child is no longer afraid, is no longer a name caller, has crossed a barrier of difference. Both are gifts of *value*."

Mr. Shriver called for social science research on the positive psychology of individuals with intellectual and other disabilities, their strengths and their families' strengths. His remarks concluded with the story of Troy Daniel, "TD" to his friends, a Special Olympics athlete with Down syndrome who was a Valedictorian for his Vermont high school class. Mr. Shriver characterized his remarks as one of the greatest speeches he had ever read. Troy Daniel wrote, "The law says I'm included. But it's my friends who say, 'TD, come sit by me.'"

*Jan Rosemergy, PhD, is director of Communications and Dissemination, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.*

# PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING™

## 07-08 CLASS GRADUATES

BY NED ANDREW SOLOMON

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, the 07-08 Partners in Policymaking class picked up their diplomas, the culmination of seven weekends worth of information on a wide variety of disability-related topics. That information, on topics such as inclusive education, building inclusive communities, assistive technology, the history of the disability experience, independent living, customized employment, working with the media, and the state and federal legislative processes, to name a few, was delivered by national and local speakers.

Along the way, participants learned from their peers: adults with disabilities and family members of persons with disabilities from across the State of Tennessee. They developed friendships and networks for future advocacy work. And, as you can see in the photos by Gerry Harris and Lynette Swinford, they had some fun too.

Looking back on this year's Partners experience, participants said:

**"Partners opened the door to advocacy for me. It enabled me ... The gathering of information for the home work puts you in charge and makes it challenging, together with life experiences."**

**"As a result of this training and new knowledge, I feel more of an obligation to be proactive in a wider set of disability issues, not just my daughter's."**

**"I have the information, but I need to work on delivering more effectively the knowledge I have gained."**

Please join us in congratulating the members of this class, who will be joining the ranks of over 300 Partners graduates since this Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities program began in 1993. We look forward to seeing them living full, meaningful lives and doing great advocacy work in their communities, on boards and committees, as conference presenters and as policymakers.



Photo by Lynette Swinford





### 07-08 CLASS GRADUATES

**James "Jim" Bailes**, Harriman

**Grace Ann Campbell**, Memphis

**Amanda Carter**, Knoxville

**Ashley Coulter**, Thompson Station

**Corinne Derenburger**, Collierville

**William "Bill" Dockery**, Knoxville

**Dena Gassner**, Franklin

**James "Jim" Harris**, Hendersonville

**Paula Hosmer**, Nashville

**Leora Jackson**, Memphis

**Nancy Kennedy**, Nashville

**Chamisa Melton**, Nashville

**Galina Merkulova**, Knoxville

**John Richardson**, Smithville

**Adrian Starks**, Memphis

**Faye Tomlin**, Linden

**Faye Townsend**, Memphis

**Ginger Walton**, Collierville

And our Honorary Partners Graduate,  
**Adrian Walker**, who attended all seven  
sessions in support of Adrian Starks.



Photos on this page by Gerry Harris

# NUTRITION RESOURCES

COMPILED BY COURTNEY TAYLOR AND BY PRESENTERS AT THE  
OBESITY CHALLENGE IN PUBLIC HEALTH CONFERENCE 2008



By the year 2010, experts predict that 50% of children living in the United States will be overweight. Because obesity is associated with conditions such as heart disease, mental health issues, cancer, hypertension, diabetes, pulmonary conditions and back problems, early prevention is of extreme importance. Teaching children the value of nutrition and physical activity at an early age may prevent these conditions from occurring in later life, and also arm them with the powerful tool of self-respect. The resources below are places to start, but certainly this is not an exhaustive list.

**Bright Futures**, initiated by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), is dedicated to the principle that every child deserves to be healthy and that optimal health involves a trusting relationship between the health professional, the child, the family and the community. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the MCHB are committed to the multidisciplinary and multicultural nature of the Bright Futures initiative. <http://brightfutures.aap.org/web/>

**Color Me Healthy** is a program developed to reach children ages four and five with fun, interactive learning opportunities on physical activity and healthy eating. [www.colormehealthy.com/](http://www.colormehealthy.com/)

**Delicious Heart-Healthy Latino Recipes** is a cookbook (available here as a Web/HTML document) produced by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NIH) and the Office of Research on Minority Health. Responding to growing health concerns among the Latino population, this cookbook takes traditional recipes and gives them a healthy twist. [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/sp\\_recip.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/sp_recip.htm)

**The Food and Nutrition Information Center** (FNIC) collects and disseminates information about food and human nutrition. From the start, FNIC has strived to serve the professional community (including educators, health professionals and researchers) as well as consumers by providing access to a wide range of trustworthy food and nutrition resources from both government and non-government sources. [http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/nal\\_display/index.php?tax\\_level=1&info\\_center=4&tax\\_subject=271](http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?tax_level=1&info_center=4&tax_subject=271)

**Fruits & Veggies — More Matters™** is a health initiative sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH). The goal is to encourage increased daily consumption of fruits and vegetables. The site has recipes, tips on how to incorporate more fruits and veggies into your diet, a section just for kids and resources. [www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/)

**Heart-Healthy Home Cooking African-American Style** is a cookbook (available here as a PDF) produced by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NIH) and the Office of Research on Minority

Health. Responding to growing health concerns among the African-American population, this cookbook takes traditional recipes and gives them a healthy twist. [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/chdblack/cooking.pdf](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/chdblack/cooking.pdf)

**HispanicHealth.info** was developed by the National Hispanic Medical Association as a portal to share key information to improve the quality of health care delivered to Hispanic populations. The information is directed to health professionals and the public. <http://hispanichealth.info/>

The **National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs** (NS-CSHCN) is sponsored by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). The survey data are used to develop updated estimates of the prevalence of special health care needs among children, both nationally and within each state. The survey also explores the extent to which children with special health care needs have medical homes, adequate health insurance and access to needed services. Other topics include functional difficulties, care coordination, satisfaction with care and transition services. [www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/slaits/nscshcn\\_05\\_06.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/slaits/nscshcn_05_06.htm)

The **Office of Coordinated School Health** (OCSH) was established by the Tennessee Department of Education in February 2001. Its primary mission is to improve student health outcomes as well as to support the connection between good health practices, academic achievement and life-time wellness. Additional funding has been provided by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <http://www.state.tn.us/education/schoolhealth/>

**Sisters Together: Move More, Eat Better** is a national initiative of the Weight-control Information Network (WIN) designed to encourage African-American women 18 and over to maintain a healthy weight by becoming more physically active and eating healthier foods. <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/sisters/index.htm>

**University of Tennessee Extension** provides nutrition and food safety education to individuals and families in Tennessee. Education is provided by faculty in County Extension Offices throughout the State. Its Web site was developed as a source of reliable nutrition and food safety information. It also provides descriptions of education programs conducted in Tennessee and partnerships with other agencies and organizations. <http://fcs.tennessee.edu/nutrfdsfy/index.htm>

# REDUCING CHILDHOOD OBESITY

BY COURTNEY TAYLOR

"Do you remember Fat Albert and his friends?" asked Theodora

Pinnock, MD, director of the Tennessee Division of Maternal and Child Health. "The 1970s cartoon cast consisted of a group of eight children, one of whom was obese and one who would be considered overweight. So, two of the eight children had weight problems. Now, if the cartoon were to emerge today and comply with current obesity statistics, the cast would look quite different. We would be laughing along with 2.5 Fat Alberts and at least 3 of his overweight friends."

Dr. Pinnock's presentation, "Is Fat Albert Getting FATER or PHATER?: Addressing childhood obesity in children of color," was part of a two-day live video conference sponsored by the University of Tennessee Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities, and hosted in Nashville by the MIND Training Project and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

The conference, "The Obesity Challenge in Public Health," focused on America's childhood obesity epidemic by examining a variety of cultural mores and health disparities, and by asking what families and communities can do to address the issue.

## HEALTH DISPARITIES

"There are health disparities among cultures and races that we can't ignore," said William Dietz, MD, PhD, director of the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Many obesity-related diseases, including diabetes, hypertension and heart disease, are found in higher rates among various members of racial-ethnic minorities in comparison with whites. We need to ask 'why?' Socioeconomic status, for example, is a factor we must consider when we look at how effectively treatment options and health education are reaching certain populations. Generally, the wealthier you are, the leaner you are. Our genetics are only about 30% of the problem."

According to a report by the Surgeon General in 2000, the overweight and obesity rates of Hispanic men and of African-American women are the highest in the United States. Seventy-four percent of Hispanic men are overweight and 39 percent are obese. Seventy-eight percent of African-American women are overweight and 50 percent are considered to be obese. Some of the elements at play in the health disparity issue are related to socio-economics, education, language barriers, acculturation, religion, folk medicine and family attitudes.

"There is a general acceptance of excess weight among certain groups that can serve as a barrier to treatment," said Dr. Pinnock. "So, in order to treat children who are overweight and obese, we have to see the children through the eyes of their parents, and we have to ask ourselves how we can convince them there is a problem. Being

'culturally competent' means we listen and we approach each family and culture with wisdom and respect. We don't come at them with all the answers. We let the families start where they are and come up with the solutions themselves."

## COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

Home is where habits begin and thus the best place to emphasize wellness as a priority. Yet to effectively address the childhood obesity epidemic, it also is necessary to consider the power of a community's influence. Schools are well-situated and hold great potential to positively contribute to the nutrition and physical activity education the nation's children receive. Dayle Hayes, MS, RD, an author, an educator and a nutrition coach, informed conference attendees that schools must accept health as academic.

"There have been countless studies that show good health has an effect on academic performance," said Ms. Hayes. "If we want to make changes in schools that may help in the prevention of childhood obesity, we have to convince them of the connection. Schools need to encourage kids to eat a healthy breakfast, and they need to provide them with the time they need to enjoy a balanced lunch. They need to provide more nutrition education, and teachers must stop using food and sweets as rewards. Also, schools must provide physical education. We want our children to be fit, healthy and ready to succeed."

By Federal mandate, all schools are required to have wellness policies. Ms. Hayes was quick to point out that having a wellness policy is one thing and implementing it is another. She said to ensure success, schools need, first, to make wellness a priority. They need to expect change to occur in baby steps and must collect data so they can tell their stories. Schools also must reward and celebrate changes and be champions for wellness.

"Our schools can play such a large role, but we have to remember they can't fight obesity alone," said Dr. Dietz. "We need the communities both on the local and the Federal levels, the schools, the families, the healthcare system and the media to take a stand and do something. We can look to tobacco control for ideas about how to approach it, but we need to act, and we need to act now."

Conference presenters and attendees recognized the complex nature of the battle against childhood obesity and recognized also that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. All agreed that in order to make strides we must accept that cultural differences will affect approaches and outcomes, and that we must work together if we are to minimize this childhood health epidemic.

*Courtney Taylor is associate director of Communications and Dissemination at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center*

# THE COUNCIL TAKES ON TEETH

## (and other dental health issues)

BY ALICIA CONE, PHD

Dental services for people with developmental disabilities in

Tennessee are woefully lacking. There are not enough dentists to serve people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (ID/DD) and there are not enough financial resources for people with ID/DD and their families to access in order to pay for the needed dental services.

Data from one county that is using Family Support money highlights the problem. Warren County had been allocated \$42,536 in Family Support; of that amount, \$18,947 went to dental work for 15 of the 43 individuals served. Costs varied from \$75 to \$140 for the initial visit to the dentist office to evaluate services required and develop a "dental treatment plan". Estimated costs of dental treatment plans were as expensive as \$6100, of which the Family Support program could only pay up to \$4000 - but rarely does due to limited funding and the number of requests. There were five people on the Warren County waiting list for dental services and the number is expected to increase. Multiply that by all 95 counties and we are only beginning to get a picture of the scope of Tennessee's dental issues.

The Council on Developmental Disabilities State Plan reflects that staff and members will be undertaking various activities over the next three to five years to improve the access of Tennesseans with disabilities, of all ages, to dental services. Our vision is that our efforts in the area of dental services will be a seamless part of a health system in which people have access to affordable preventative services (once a year check up and cleaning) and restorative dental services when needed.

At the October, 2006, Council Planning Retreat, the first step in the planning and activity development process was taken: a brainstorming session on dental services in Tennessee.

The following needs and issues were identified:

### NEEDS

dentists who are sensitive to disability

consumer access to dental services

identification and comprehensive review of national models

exploration of untapped resources and collaborators

### ISSUES

little training on disability for dentists/hygienists/technicians

lack of access to preventative services

lack of affordable dental services

lack of health insurance coverage for dental services

lack of knowledge about available funding resources

few providers that are physically accessible to people with disabilities

At our December 2006 Council meeting, the Planning Committee mapped out next steps.

- Explore hiring an intern to assist with dental research activities.
- Conduct an Internet review of dental resources.
- Survey State agencies about dental resources and dental services offered.
- Identify potential collaborators in Tennessee.
- Research Tennessee health policy for references to dental services.
- Survey Family Support Coordinators about the need for dental services.

Since that December meeting, each of these steps has been completed, resulting in summaries of what State agencies in Tennessee offer in regard to dental services, dental activities or initiatives across the United States and potential Tennessee and national dental resources, in addition to the identification of potential partners in any future dental activities.

Two things are very clear from these research efforts. First, sustainability of dental services for people with ID/DD relies on the availability of – and, where necessary, the amending of – Medicaid Waiver dental services to ensure that both children and adults receive preventative and restorative services in addition to emergency services. Second, some form of education or training and technical assistance in the area of disability is needed for dentists and other practitioners (for example, hygienists) in the field of dentistry.

Partners that have been identified in Tennessee joined Council members and staff at the May, 2008, Council meeting to present recommended activities. The result will be a series of activities approved by the Council to reach our vision of preventative and restorative dental services for all Tennesseans, regardless of age or geographic location.

*Alicia Cone is project research and development coordinator for the Council on Developmental Disabilities.*





# TENNESSEE CAREER CENTERS ADD SERVICES FOR JOB SEEKERS

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THE TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES: TENNESSEE CAREER CENTERS ADD SERVICES

BY JOY MARGRAVE

Tennessee Career Centers have added another service to their array of programs connecting job seekers to employers. The Career Readiness Certificate verifies the readiness of an individual to apply basic academic skills to a specific job. Both the assessment for these certificates and skill building opportunities will be available in all Career Centers during 2008. This project is funded by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development through funds set aside by the State under the guidance of the State Workforce Development Board and Commissioner James Neeley.

The Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) was developed by American College Testing (ACT), which also designed the well known college entrance test. Unlike other standards of academic success, such as high school graduation or indicators for grade level achieved, the CRC measures how well the job applicant can use those skills to accomplish workplace tasks. Instead of grade levels, the assessment results are given in achievement levels for skills in Applied Math, Locating Information and Reading for Information. Because it is a nationally recognized certificate, CRC scores can be transported to employers anywhere.

Individuals with disabilities may request accommodations when taking the CRC assessments. These may include additional time, Braille or Large-print, Reader/Signer, etc. Standards set by ACT require the person making such a request to have a documented disability with a direct link to the requested accommodation. Specifically, the individual must have written documentation of a disability by a qualified professional within the past five years. Young job applicants may use a current Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Decisions on the use of accommodations will be made by Career Center staff based on guidelines established by ACT.

Three levels of certificates are available to Tennesseans who wish to be more competitive in the workplace. A Bronze Certificate, which indicates readiness for many jobs, verifies that the individual has achieved a level 3 in all skill assessments. The Silver Certificate demonstrates the individual can apply basic skills to the workplace at a level 4 in math, reading and locating information. A Gold Certificate, the highest award, indicates the individual achieved a level 5 in all three measured skills.

In the event an individual wishes to increase their skill levels, skill upgrade opportunities are available at the Career Centers. This computer based learning focuses on the specific skill, or skills, the person wants to improve. The assessments, as well as the skill upgrade modules, are computer based. In order to successfully take the assessments and to participate in the learning activities, one must be able to read on a basic level and use a computer. The certificates are not a replacement for academic achievement; they simply determine at what level academic skills may be applied in the workplace.

Career Readiness Certificates add value to the job application because the CRC shows the employer that the job candidate can perform a specific level of job tasks. Whereas measures of academic success indicate future success in school tasks, the CRC levels indicate success in using academic skills in a work setting. For instance, someone who does not read instructions with ease may read gauges and measures very well. CRC assesses for both of these skills as well as math applied to job tasks.

The Tennessee Career Center system offers a variety of additional services designed to connect job seekers to jobs. A partnership of programs available at the Career Center offers job listings, referrals to employers with openings and workshops on résumé preparation, interviewing and marketing one's self to employers. The partnership also strives to serve employer needs by referring job seekers who have the skills to perform the employers' jobs. The Career Center may also serve as the gateway to other employment resources including training opportunities.

In recent years, a great emphasis on serving customers with disabilities resulted in increased structural and programmatic accessibility at the Career Centers. Job seekers with disabilities will find accommodations in the form of technology, program and communication. A Disability Program Navigator serves each of the 13 major Career Centers in the State, and may be contacted for more information. To locate a Career Center near you, visit the Tennessee Department of Labor Web site and click on "Find a Career Center" or go to <http://www.state.tn.us/laborwfd/cc/>.

*Joy Trapp Margrave has concentrated her career in planning and program administration, primarily in economic and workforce development. She holds a bachelor's degree in Public Administration and a Master of Science in Human Resource Development. Ms. Margrave is statewide coordinator for the Disability Program Navigator Initiative.*

**COMMUNITY OPTIONS, INC.** is holding their annual National Conference in Nashville at the Hermitage Hotel from September 7-10, 2008. This year's Conference, *Securing the Future & Bridging the Gap*, focuses on Transitional School-To-Work programs for young adults with developmental disabilities.

The conference will provide a national forum that promotes greater social and economic participation of people with disabilities, and result in a consensus-based plan of action. Participants, who include individuals

with disabilities, parents, professionals, and employers, will have the opportunity to discuss current issues regarding Transitional Services or the lack thereof, identify barriers and opportunities, and develop short and long-term plans for local and national action and advocacy.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER PLEASE CONTACT:

Lisa Smith at [Lisa.Smith@comop.org](mailto:Lisa.Smith@comop.org), phone 1-877-875-1212 or visit their Web site [www.transitionstoschooltowork.org](http://www.transitionstoschooltowork.org).

# THE ARTIST'S VOICE:

## An Exhibition Featuring Tennessee Artists with Disabilities

BY ROSE MARY GORMAN

The Frist Center for the Visual Arts opened *The Artist's Voice*:

*An Exhibition Featuring Tennessee Artists with Disabilities* on Friday, May 16, in the Conte Community Arts Gallery. The juried exhibition presents more than 50 paintings, prints, sculptures, digital art and documentary film created by 54 Tennessee artists, who each live with a disability. The artists and their works were selected by a juried panel from more than 400 submissions. Admission is free for this exhibition, which will continue through September 14, 2008.

"The works in *The Artist's Voice* are a testament to the power of art to eliminate barriers as it offers healing, strength, and encouragement to its creators, while giving voice to the varied lives of these resilient artists," said Anne Henderson, director of education at the Frist Center. "The artwork provides a visual language that broadens our own understanding as well, not only of people with disabilities, but also of our connections with each other and the world."

The works featured in the exhibition have an expressive force and sense of beauty that transcend any limitations that might be imposed by their makers' disabilities. The artists' personal circumstances often inform their art, as well as their chosen media. Some of the works explore an artist's daily struggles of living with a disability; others convey a positive outlook, rich with vitality and raw energy that is often achieved through the use of bright, bold color. Intertwining themes of strength, resilience, fragility, contentment and endurance can be seen throughout this exhibition. Though each work stands on its own artistic merit, the individual stories of their creators make the art even more engaging and awe inspiring.

The artists in this exhibition are motivated to make art for many reasons. Some use the creative process as a means of coming to terms with their particular situations and the world, while others use art as an escape from it. All of the artists attest to the therapeutic value of art and maintain that creating it assists them in their personal efforts to heal, live, and flourish in the world at large.

"In art, I am free to lose my disability over [to] the ways that the colors and lines flow from a soul's expression," writes Lyrica Marquez, an artist with autism. "It frees the 'me' who has no spoken words, only color and form as my own independent language. My art gives me a home in an otherwise hard-to-fit-in world."

In advance of the exhibition, the Frist Center collaborated with VSA arts of Tennessee and Full Circle Art to provide free workshops across the State for artists. Participants learned how to create professional portfolios, write artist statements and photograph work for submission to juried art exhibitions.



By artist Anne Ambrose

An advisory committee assisted the Frist Center with the process of organizing this exhibition. Participants included individual artists and community members with and without disabilities, and representatives from Centerstone, Full Circle Art, Pacesetters, Inc., Technology Access Center, Tennessee Arts Commission, Tennessee Disability Coalition, Tennessee Performing Arts Center, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, Vanderbilt University Medical Center and VSA arts of Tennessee.

*The Artist's Voice* is sponsored by HCA and the TriStar Family of Hospitals. This project is also supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Rose Mary Gorman is public relations manager at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts.

**TENNESSEE ARTISTS WITH  
DISABILITIES SHOW ARTWORK**  
**MAY 16-SEPT. 14, 2008**





# Partners 2008 Reunion Conference

**Mark Your Calendar!**  
the 2009 Reunion takes  
place March 13-14, 2009

All photos by Christy Wells-Reece

## HISPANIC OUTREACH PROGRAM UPDATE: CONOSCA SUS DERECHOS WORKSHOP

On March 27, 2008, Tennessee Disability Pathfinder partnered with the Disability Law and Advocacy Center (DLAC) and Support and Training for Exceptional Parents (STEP) to provide training to Hispanic families who have children with disabilities. Both agencies presented information about the rights of people with disabilities and their families, and described situations in which they can help. STEP gave a short version of their "Know Your Rights" training on special education laws and effectively working with the school team. Pathfinder provided childcare and invited community members, as well as participants of Pathfinder's support group for Spanish-speaking families of children with disabilities. A group of 30 individuals attended this workshop, which was held at Nashville's Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church. Following the workshop, Pathfinder mailed evaluation forms and support group information to attendees.

The Hispanic Outreach Program provides statewide information and assistance for children and adults with disabilities, as well as community training and technical assistance. A support group for Spanish-speaking parents of children with disabilities meets monthly and a bilingual resource database provides information about disability, mental health and social services for the Hispanic community ([www.caminoseguro.org](http://www.caminoseguro.org)). For more information contact Claudia Avila-Lopez, Hispanic outreach coordinator, at [claudia.avila@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:claudia.avila@vanderbilt.edu) or 800-640-4636 (ext. 11).

## TELL US ABOUT IT!

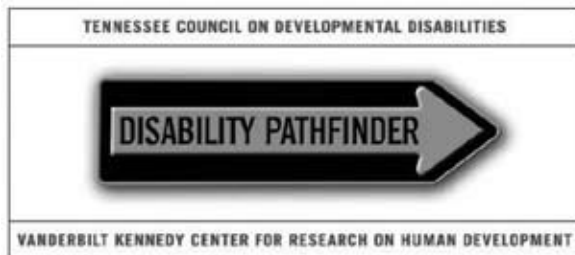
Tennessee Disability Pathfinder is collecting information on parent and volunteer led activities across the State. While programs listed in Pathfinder's online database and print directory must meet formal inclusion criteria, we know that there are activities that don't meet these criteria, but are just as valuable. We are gathering this information for a new section of our Web site, [www.familypathfinder.org](http://www.familypathfinder.org).

### Is there a child care or respite care cooperative in your community? Have you joined with other families to create a sports program or support group?

Any information you can provide is appreciated. The following are most helpful:

- Name of group/description of activity
- Activity location
- Contact person
- Phone number
- Web site (if available)

Submit information to Ashley F. Coulter at [ashley.coulter@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:ashley.coulter@vanderbilt.edu) or 800-640-4636 (ext. 15).



## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

### Tennessee Disability Pathfinder

English & Español  
(615) 322-8529  
(800) 640-4636

TTY/TDD users:  
please dial 711 for  
free relay service

### [www.familypathfinder.org](http://www.familypathfinder.org)

[tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu)



*Melissa Fortson is information  
& referral specialist/program  
coordinator with Tennessee  
Disability Pathfinder.*

*Carole Moore-Slater, MS, is  
director of Tennessee Disability  
Pathfinder.*

## FAREWELL TO MELISSA FORTSON

Disability Pathfinder bids farewell to Melissa Fortson as she heads to the University of Alabama to pursue a Master of Library and Information Services (MLIS) degree. Melissa started with Pathfinder in 2005 and has been a valuable member of our team in identifying community services and relevant information for individuals with disabilities and their families. We will definitely miss her but wish her the best of luck in her studies and in the future!

**Tennessee Disability Pathfinder has phone, Web and print resources in English and Spanish to connect the Tennessee disability community with service providers.** Referral services, free of cost, are provided to persons with disabilities, family members, service providers and advocates. Pathfinder is a joint project of the **TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES** and the **VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**.



# • We cannot afford to wait: • Fulfilling the Promise in Tennessee

BY TRACY PENDERGRASS

Robert Leatherwood loves WWE wrestling and video games. He

attends Haynes Design Magnet School for Health and Sciences, has a girlfriend and enjoys horseback riding. Mr. Leatherwood is like any other 12-year-old boy. His only difference is that he uses a wheelchair because he has cerebral palsy. Mr. Leatherwood, like so many others with a developmental disability other than mental retardation in Tennessee, has almost no options for home and community based services. His mother, Cynthia Leatherwood, fears that if something happened to her, Mr. Leatherwood might end up in a nursing home.

Daniel Miner, 20, and his mother, Donna Taylor, have the same fears. "I don't feel I belong in a nursing home," said Mr. Miner. "My grandmother is in a nursing home and she can't go anywhere. You may not be able to tell it, but I'm very active."

In fact, Mr. Miner also uses a wheelchair, but it didn't prevent him from participating in the Music City Half-Marathon in April.

The Fulfill the Promise legislation, Senate Bill 2651 and House Bill 2569, brings hope to the lives of those who do not receive services under the current Mental Health and Developmental Disability statutes. Although the law, Title 33 of the Tennessee Code Annotated, makes people with a developmental disability other than mental retardation eligible for services, no funding has been made available. Without the diagnosis of mental retardation, people with a developmental disability have nowhere to turn. "I'm 20 years old and I feel funny telling people I'm still in high school," Mr. Miner said. "I have two years left. After that I'm stuck. I want to work and come home like everyone else."

## FULFILL THE PROMISE CAMPAIGN

Grassroots advocates across Tennessee have been urging their legislators to support the Fulfill the Promise legislation. Organizers have utilized a variety of events to bring awareness to their legislators about the lack of services available for those with a developmental disability. Fulfill the Promise rallies, personal visits and Disability Days on the Hill provided opportunities for self-advocacy.

The Fulfill the Promise campaign has allowed many people in the developmental disability community to learn about the legislative process. Senator Jim Tracy, primary sponsor of the Fulfill the Promise legislation in the State Senate, provides suggestions to advocates. "Contact their own legislators and through the guidance of the Fulfill the Promise campaign contact every member of the Finance Committees," said Senator Tracy. "Then be very specific about why the bill is important and what the bill will do."

It has been these face-to-face interactions between advocates and State legislators that have made such a tremendous impact in spreading awareness of the need for services.

"It is important that they see your face and make the connection that this bill is not just words on a page, but about people," said Donna Taylor.

The legislation has gained unparalleled support from the State House of Representatives and State Senate. Currently, there are 57 co-sponsors in the House, including Speaker of the House, James O. Naifeh, and 15 co-sponsors in the Senate, including Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey.

"I choose not to believe that the governing body of the State of Tennessee does not care, but rather, that they are just not aware," said Mary Tilson of Johnson City, who has a developmental disability and lives with her mother, Linda Tilson.

Senator Tracy said, "It is the right thing to do for people with developmental disabilities. This legislation fulfills the promise we made .... We have to prioritize. This is something very, very important. We must fund this. I am very passionate about this."

Proponents of the legislation contend that providing services will be an investment in the system, rather than taking money away. "I now have a nurse that helps take care of me," said Carol Smith of Knoxville, who lives with her parents and has a developmental disability. "It is very important for this legislation to pass so that people like me can receive services in their home. That would cost the State less money ..."

With a little support, people with developmental disabilities can get jobs and become taxpayers. "Daniel wants to work," Ms. Taylor said. "If we just had a little bit of services, then our whole household could work and become taxpaying citizens. We aren't asking for a handout."

Most importantly, the Fulfill the Promise legislation is about providing an opportunity to have a better quality of life. "I am a competent woman who wants to have a dignified, fulfilling life," said Ms. Tilson. "I want to live in my own home and be a productive citizen of the community."

In the end, the State's budget crisis was a major obstacle. The bill was placed behind the budget in the State House Budget Subcommittee and was never heard in the Senate Finance Ways and Means Committee. But the campaign will return again next year with renewed vigor!

*Tracy Pendergrass coordinated the Fulfill the Promise campaign as an intern with the Council on Developmental Disabilities.*

Partners 99-00 graduate, **Cheryl Spencer** of Louisville, Tennessee, has been named the **Tennessee Mother of the Year** by the **Tennessee Mothers Association of American Mothers, Inc.** Ms. Spencer is the mother of six adult children and works for the Middle Tennessee Advocacy Center and for The Arc of Tennessee. A reception to honor Ms. Spencer was held May 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Knoxville.

**Pam Bryan**, Partners 04-05 graduate, recently accepted a position with the **Epilepsy Foundation of Middle and West Tennessee**, as coordinator of Client Services.

**Brook Dickerson** has been hired as the executive director for **ASA-ETC** (Autism Society of America's East Tennessee Chapter). ASA-ETC also announces the opening of its new offices at 200 Prosperity Drive, Suite 224, in Knoxville.

In 2003, Partners 07-08 graduate, **Corinne Derenburger** started **Ryan's HOPE**, a 501(c)3 ministry in honor of her son who had a disability. Initially established as a support group for moms, it quickly grew into an organization serving Memphis and the surrounding areas. This year, **Ryan's HOPE** won the **4 Star Recreation Award** from the **Tennessee Department of Recreation** and the **United Way of the Mid-South's Innovator Award in Helping Children with Special Needs**. In addition, Ms. Derenburger herself was recently recognized as one of the top people of the Mid-South who make a difference in their communities and was the recipient of the **Courage Award from Women of Achievement**.

At its 2008 Leadership Meeting in April, the **Traumatic Brain Injury Technical Assistance Center (TBITAC)** recognized the **Tennessee Department of Health's Project BRAIN** for its "Virtual School" product. Forty-nine states and territories receive Federal TBI Grants. Products developed by grantees are shared via the Collaboration Space on the Technical Assistance Center Web site. The Virtual School has been adapted by several other states and, therefore, won the award for the "Most Adapted Product".

**Project BRAIN** wishes to acknowledge everyone for their valuable contributions to this project, especially **Patsy Allen**, MS, CCC-SLP, **Timothy J. Feeney**, PhD, **Beth Urbanczyk**, MScCC, **Mark Ylvisaker**, PhD, the **Tennessee TBI Program**, the **Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Education**, the **Tennessee Disability Coalition** and all of the Project BRAIN staff.

**Wheel Me On** is celebrating its 10th Anniversary. The organization was founded in 1998 by **Julia Hollenbeck** and is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Clarksville. The organization's mission is to educate, motivate and encourage persons with disabilities to engage in activities by promoting awareness in society. Some of their activities include a Service Animal Program, an annual Queen City Road Race Wheelchair Division, and initiatives that support America's Veterans of War.

Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) 2003 graduate, **John T Farley** will have a role in Collierville's **Harrell Theatre** production of Disney's *High School Musical 2*. Performances will run from late July through the first weekend in August.

YLF 2002 graduate, **Nick Trail** is completing his master's degree in Public Relations at **UT Knoxville**, after graduating last year with a BS in Psychology. In addition, Mr. Trail will be a program assistant at the 2008 Youth Leadership Forum.

**Sarah Elizabeth Musgrave** of Hendersonville was nominated for and received the **National VSA arts Excellence in Leadership Award**. Each year, the 50 stateside affiliates of VSA arts are asked to submit a nomination for an individual who has displayed outstanding leadership for a VSA affiliate. Typically, these individuals are top CEO executives. "I have never known the award to go to a teenager," reports **Lori Kissinger**, executive director of VSA arts Tennessee. Ms. Musgrave was instrumental to the success of the recent Tennessee Dulcimer Choir. [see BG Issue 42 5/08, page 16] Ms. Kissinger presented the award to Ms. Musgrave at the Merrol Hyde Magnet School Senior Awards Night.



Photo by Rosemary Wilson

Angela Hazlehurst with her son, Yates

The **Yates Foundation** held its first fundraising event in April. More than 100 people attended the gala, themed "**Breaking the Silence**", which was held in the Aeneas Building in downtown Jackson. The Foundation was established by **Angela Hazlehurst**, a member of the **Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities**, in honor of her son, **Yates**, who has autism. State Representative **Jimmy Eldridge** and **Jacque Hillman**, niche publications editor for *The Jackson Sun*, were honored at the event as the first recipients of the **Autism Advocate Awards**.

The Yates Foundation's mission is to advocate on behalf of and to empower those in the autism community to never give up in their search to help their loved ones reach their full potential. The Foundation plans to accomplish this mission by raising public and professional awareness of autism and related disorders; by soliciting and receiving funds in order to provide financial and educational help to families in need; and by assisting in the advancement of research of individuals with autism and related disorders.

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Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0228

**Questions?** Call 615-532-6556 or email: [ned.solomon@state.tn.us](mailto:ned.solomon@state.tn.us)

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